

6-29-09

Memorandum

To: Task Force to the Future for Growth and Development

From: Smart Growth Indicators Workgroup

Date: June 29, 2009

Subject: Indicators Report

Introduction

Is Maryland successfully achieving its smart growth objectives? If not what are the issues that are preventing the achievement of statewide visions and goals? Are there feasible corrective actions available to policy makers? And, more basic than that, how and where are we growing? What type of growth? These and many other questions provide much of the motivation for creating smart growth indicators. For the Indicators Workgroup and the Task Force on the Future for Growth and Development in Maryland, additional motivation came in the form of House Bill 295 (from the 2009 Session), which required the Task Force investigate and report to the legislature on seven potential smart growth indicators and the usefulness of other indicators to assess Maryland's smart growth progress. The seven mandated areas are:

1. Housing choice and affordability;
2. The environment (air, water, and land);
3. Growth's fiscal cost;
4. Jobs to housing balance;
5. The effect of transportation on growth;
6. Business, jobs, fiscal impacts, agribusiness, tourism and forestry;
7. Cultural and historic resources.

The Workgroup met four times. At the first meeting, the group heard from the University of Maryland Center for Smart Growth Research and Education who provided an initial primer on indicators. MDP put together the framework for evaluating potential indicators in the form of a matrix. At subsequent meetings, members of the workgroup with experience/expertise in the seven legislated subject areas provided descriptions of potential indicators to the matrix. The Workgroup screened the preliminary matrix and developed its final recommended indicators for the seven legislated areas for consideration.

Attachment 1 contains the indicator matrix. This matrix is divided into two sections: "Recommended" and "Issues". The group discussed many possible indicators for subject area. The recommended section includes approximately 30 indicators that were agreed upon by the members. These indicators are considered to have available data or the data can be easily collected. The workgroup reviewed another 25 indicators that the group either could not reach consensus on or the group determined that the data was not available and/or the required analysis

would be too burdensome. The group understands that this is still a long list. However, many of the indicators listed are already being collected by either local governments or state agencies.

In Attachment 2, the Workgroup provides the Center for Smart Growth's introduction to indicators. Attachment 3 contains several short excerpts from the American Planning Association's report on community indicators to help the Task Force assess the recommended indicators.

Given the short time the Workgroup had to prepare its recommendations on the legislated areas, the group recommends that the Task Force report to the legislature that for the time being all indicators beyond those required by HB 295 should be optional.

The Workgroup understands that the process of creating an effective set of indicators requires a significant amount of research and testing to determine data availability and indicator efficacy. Further, use of the final indicators must recognize the wide variability among jurisdictions.

Therefore, any additional indicators should be determined after a period of appraisal that ensures they really measure and link to smart growth efforts. Indicators should be a tool for community assessment and policy development, while using readily available data. Indicators should not result in a useless administrative burden producing little policy guidance. Therefore to be done right, indicator development will take time and probably several iterations of the initial indicators recommended by the Workgroup.